



Canadian
Transportation
Agency

Office
des transports
du Canada

Monitoring and Compliance Report Summary

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Marine Atlantic



Making Transportation Efficient and Accessible for All

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Canada

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Background

The Canadian Transportation Agency (Agency) is responsible for ensuring that undue obstacles to the mobility of persons with disabilities are removed from federally regulated transportation services and facilities, which include air, rail, and extra-provincial ferry and bus transportation. It seeks to remove such obstacles by developing standards (regulations, codes of practice and guidelines); communicating with the transportation industry and the community of persons with disabilities; and by resolving individual accessibility-related disputes and ordering corrective measures as required.

The Agency follows the federal government's policy of setting standards using alternatives to regulations, and therefore develops voluntary codes of practice and guidelines. With respect to federally regulated marine transportation accessibility, three such codes of practice apply: the *Code of Practice: Ferry Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities* (Ferry Code); the *Code of Practice: Passenger Terminal Accessibility* (Terminal Code); and the *Code of Practice: Removing Communication Barriers for Travellers with Disabilities* (Communication Code). These codes of practice, like all of the Agency's accessibility standards, were developed in consultation with the Agency's Accessibility Advisory Committee and other stakeholders. By complying with these codes, ferry operators ensure a minimum level of accessibility for their vessels and terminals, and that communication of transportation-related information is accessible for persons with disabilities.

The Agency actively monitors compliance by transportation service providers with its standards. A risk-based approach to prioritizing its monitoring activities is used and Agency staff works with

transportation service providers to address deficiencies identified during monitoring exercises. The Agency publicly reports on the results of its compliance initiatives.

Marine Atlantic

In 2009, Agency staff initiated a monitoring exercise of Marine Atlantic Inc. (Marine Atlantic), which provides federally mandated passenger and commercial ferry services on two routes in the Maritimes: a year-round daily ferry service between Port aux Basques, Newfoundland and Labrador and North Sydney, Nova Scotia; and a tri-weekly summer ferry service between Argentia, Newfoundland and Labrador and North Sydney, Nova Scotia. Marine Atlantic owns and operates the terminals at Port aux Basques, Argentia and North Sydney. These routes are serviced by four ice-class vessels – the MV “JOSEPH AND CLARA SMALLWOOD”; MV “CARIBOU”; MV “LEIF ERICSSON”; and MV “ATLANTIC VISION”.

Monitoring Focus

Agency staff visited Marine Atlantic in June 2009. This visit was undertaken for several reasons. Marine Atlantic had begun an extensive revitalization program, a large part of which focuses on facility, vessel, and other capital renewal initiatives. More specifically, Marine Atlantic’s newest vessel at the time of the visit, the “ATLANTIC VISION”, entered into service in April 2009 and Marine Atlantic wanted to ensure that the vessel was accessible. The visit also coincided with the coming into effect of the Terminal Code and with a meeting of Marine Atlantic’s Accessibility Advisory Committee, at which Agency staff provided a presentation on the Agency’s new monitoring framework.

“Atlantic Vision”

Agency staff undertook an accessibility review of the “Atlantic Vision”. Agency staff’s observations from touring the “Atlantic Vision” were generally consistent with observations from a previous accessibility audit that Marine Atlantic had commissioned.

In April 2010, Agency staff followed up on its review of the “ATLANTIC VISION”, which was scheduled for maintenance and retrofitting in dry-dock. Agency staff provided guidance to Marine Atlantic on how to enhance the accessibility of the vessel in accordance with the Ferry Code, including references in the Code to the Canadian Standards Association’s B651 standard, *Accessibility Design for the Built Environment*. The feedback provided to Marine Atlantic included specifications for signage, stairways, handrails, corridors, doorways, telecommunications, elevators, the vehicle deck, lounges, cafeterias, cabins and washrooms.

The scheduled maintenance and retrofitting of the “ATLANTIC VISION” was undertaken in dry-dock, and the vessel resumed regular service shortly thereafter.

In light of recent announcements by Marine Atlantic to charter two new vessels to replace the aging “CARIBOU” and “JOSEPH AND CLARA SMALLWOOD” and to refurbish its terminal facilities, Agency staff and Marine Atlantic have been in communication to discuss the accessibility features of the terminals and the new vessels with a view to enhancing compliance with the Agency’s codes.

Given the above considerations, Agency staff undertook inspections of the Marine Atlantic’s terminals at Port aux Basques and North Sydney. Staff provided detailed reports to Marine Atlantic regarding the terminals’ compliance with the accessibility provisions in the

Terminal Code and Communication Code. Summaries of those reports are set out below. To view the provisions of either Code, visit the Agency's Web site at www.cta.qc.ca.

Port aux Basques Terminal, Newfoundland and Labrador

Overview

Overall, findings were positive. Marine Atlantic's Port aux Basques terminal provides a good level of accessibility, and is largely compliant with the applicable provisions of the Terminal Code and Communication Code.

The accessibility features at the Port aux Basques terminal are maintained in good working order. Surfaces were in good repair, there were no obstructions, and paths were clear. Drop-off and pick-up areas are available at the curb, close to the entrance and exit areas. Designated rest area seating is widely available and identified by the universal symbol of access.

Ground transportation service providers serving the Port aux Basques terminal have adapted vehicles to accommodate the transportation of people with disabilities using large mobility aids; it was reported that a taxi company that serves the terminal operates an accessible shuttle bus.

For passengers travelling with vehicles, a process is in place to ensure that passengers with disabilities can park their vehicles in a designated area after boarding the vessel. These designated parking areas in the vessel are located close to an elevator, by which passengers with disabilities can gain access to the passenger decks.

Boarding and disembarking for walk-on passengers is carried out via a shuttle bus, which is owned and operated by Marine Atlantic. The shuttle bus is wheelchair lift-equipped and passengers with disabilities board first. Passengers are transferred directly to the ferry's gangway. Thus, safe and dignified boarding and disembarking is provided for persons with disabilities. Marine Atlantic issues temporary escort passes at all of the terminals it owns and operates so that passengers with disabilities can be escorted onto the vessel by family or friends.

There is an undesignated area outside for service animals to relieve themselves, which is accessed by a safe path of travel on a sidewalk between the terminal and relieving area. The terminal staff are aware of the location of the relieving area. The undesignated relieving area is adequately maintained.

Public announcements are provided in both audio and visual format. There are two amber signal lights in the waiting area to announce that boarding has begun and audio announcements are clear and easily heard. Pre-recorded messages are often used to improve the clarity of the announcements.

Any questions or comments regarding accessibility can be directed to Marine Atlantic staff at any of its terminals or via its toll-free reservation number. Marine Atlantic also has a toll-free TTY Line.

Areas for improvement

Some recommendations made to Marine Atlantic by Agency staff for the Port aux Basques terminal included the addition of signage in the blue zone parking lanes designated for use in the marshalling area (an area to direct the flow of passengers' vehicles onto the ferry) by

persons with disabilities when boarding the ferry; adding signage to explicitly denote the relieving area for service animals; and increased use of tactile signage throughout the terminal.

North Sydney Terminal, Nova Scotia

Overview

Findings were also positive for the North Sydney terminal where, again, Marine Atlantic offers good accessibility features, and is largely compliant with the applicable provisions of the Terminal Code and Communication Code.

Accessibility features are maintained in good working order. All passenger floors of the terminal are accessible via an elevator. Surfaces were in good repair, there were no obstructions, and paths were clear. Drop-off and pick-up areas are available at the curb, close to the entrance and exit areas. Curb cuts and ramps leading to the terminal have been constructed.

Designated parking for persons with disabilities is available in the parking lot. A special waiting lane marked with blue paint in the compound marshalling area is reserved for passengers with disabilities. Not only does this arrangement aid these passengers in accessing the terminal, it also assists in the parking of passengers' vehicles in a designated area on the ferry.

There is ample seating in the corridors, near ticket counters and in departure areas. In addition, designated seating is provided for persons with disabilities. Much like the Port aux Basques terminal, boarding and disembarking for walk-on passengers at the North Sydney terminal is carried out via a shuttle bus owned and operated by Marine Atlantic. The shuttle bus is wheelchair lift-equipped and

passengers with disabilities board first. Passengers are transferred directly to the ferry's gangway. Thus, safe and dignified boarding and disembarking is provided for persons with disabilities.

Temporary escort passes can be obtained so as to permit passengers with disabilities to be escorted onto the vessel by family or friends. For mobility aids which cannot be used onboard (e.g. scooters), the terminal provides a means to securely transfer the mobility aid to or from the boarding level in preparation for carriage, without hand carrying it. Such mobility aids are placed in a baggage van and are stored on the vessel as checked baggage.

Outside the North Sydney terminal, there is a well-marked designated area for service animals to relieve themselves. The relieving area is adequately maintained and terminal staff is aware of the location of the relieving area. There is a safe path of travel on a sidewalk between the terminal and the relieving area.

Numerous pay telephones are available throughout the terminal. Each bank of payphones include a TTY-equipped payphone.

Braille numbers are provided in elevators. Signage and pictographs are presented in high contrasting colours (white letters, numbers and symbols on a dark blue background). The font used for letters is a Sans Serif type. The terminal map in the lobby, which is situated on a raised pedestal from the floor, is relatively easy to read. In addition to an audio boarding announcement, there is a prominent amber light which flashes at boarding time. There is a sign underneath the light indicating its meaning, along with a very large arrow pointing from the sign to the flashing light.

Areas for improvement

Some recommendations made to Marine Atlantic by Agency staff for the North Sydney terminal included the development of accessible ground transportation contracts; the addition of accessible seating in rest/waiting areas with liftable armrests; the addition of lowered payphones for easier use by persons using wheelchairs; and consideration of additional means to communicate messages in the terminal in full audio and visual formats.

Accessible Features

The Marine Atlantic Web site provides information on accessible features and services, dealing with such matters as reserving the adaptive cabin, travelling with service animals, accessible signage, manual wheelchair service, etc. Additionally, Marine Atlantic encourages passengers with disabilities to speak with customer service representatives at its terminals or to call its toll-free reservation number.

Like all terminals owned and operated by Marine Atlantic, the Port aux Basques and North Sydney terminals provide Web pages with information specific to those terminals on the Marine Atlantic Web site. As an evaluation of Marine Atlantic's Web site was not conducted as part of this monitoring exercise, this provision of the Communication Code was not assessed.

Marine Atlantic's multiple format policy ensures that information related to services and features provided by Marine Atlantic is available in multiple formats. Where practicable, the timeframe for providing information in alternative formats is not greater than that required for providing standard print versions. Marine Atlantic and the

terminals it owns and operates use alternative information systems for communicating information related to the successful execution of the trip to persons with disabilities.

Conclusion

Marine Atlantic's North Sydney and Port aux Basques terminals provide good accessibility features and services and related communication with passengers with disabilities. The terminals are generally in compliance with the provisions of the Terminal Code and the Communication Code. Areas for improvement are noted above.

Accessible facilities, services and communication are of vital importance to Marine Atlantic, as well as to all marine terminals and transportation service providers in general. With this in mind, Agency staff will continue to work with Marine Atlantic and other operators to enhance their compliance with the Ferry, Terminal and Communication Codes.

The Agency will provide periodic updated reports on its Web site as additional monitoring and compliance initiatives are undertaken.

For further information:

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